



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the PSRS?

The Patient Safety Reporting System (PSRS) is a program being jointly developed by the Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to discover and learn about issues related to patient safety through a voluntary, confidential reporting system. The PSRS invites all personnel who work in VA medical facilities to voluntarily report any events or concerns related to patient safety.

Why is NASA involved in a VA program?

NASA has administered a similar and very successful program, the Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) for more than 25 years without ever violating a reporter's confidentiality. NASA is an independent, respected research organization that does not have a regulatory or enforcement interest. It can therefore serve as an objective, trustworthy custodian of reports submitted by VA personnel. The ASRS has provided this guarantee to the aviation community and its 500,000 reports without ever violating a reporter's confidentiality.

Is the PSRS replacing any of the VA's other reporting systems?

No. The PSRS is completely different and is designed to be *complementary* to the VA's other reporting systems.

For example, the VA's internal (Root Cause Analysis) system identifies the basic causal factors associated with Adverse Events and Close Calls and provides detailed action plans to decrease the likelihood of reoccurrence. In contrast, the PSRS system is designed to identify broad system vulnerabilities and act as a "safety valve" for important safety information.

Are PSRS reports protected?

Yes, the VA has determined that the PSRS report is protected under its existing Title 38 United States Code 5705. PSRS reports are considered confidential and privileged quality assurance documents that are under NASA's control.

PSRS analysts remove all personal names, facility names, locations, and other potentially identifying information from the reports.

What types of events may be reported to the PSRS?

Use the PSRS to report these types of events:

- "Close Calls" - events or situations that could have resulted in accident, injury, or illness, but did not, either by chance or through timely intervention;

- Unexpected serious injury occurrences that involved a death, physical injury, or psychological injury of a patient or an employee;
- Lessons learned or safety ideas.

Any safety-related event may be reported to the PSRS.

What types of events are excluded from PSRS reporting?

Several types of events are not protected by 38 USC 5705. These include the following intentionally unsafe acts:

- Criminal;
- Purposefully unsafe acts;
- Alleged or suspected patient abuse.

These intentional unsafe acts are not included in the PSRS program and are the responsibility of the observer to report through proper channels.

How does a facility or the system get feedback when someone files a report?

If the situation is deemed a serious one by our medical safety analysts, PSRS will send out a system-wide Patient Safety Bulletin. The Patient Safety Bulletin will be distributed without any source identification. Publications, outreach, special reports, and database information will also be made available.

If PSRS is confidential, why is the reporter's name required?

It may be necessary for the PSRS medical analyst to contact a reporter to clarify or obtain additional data for an accurate, detailed understanding of a report. Once this analysis is completed, the identification strip is removed, signed by the analyst and mailed to the reporter.

Where can I find a PSRS form?

Postage-paid PSRS Reporting forms will be made available in plastic holders at convenient locations in VA medical facilities such as nurses' stations, staff lounges, and other sites easily accessible to staff. If you find these holders are empty, please contact your facility's Patient Safety Manager for more supplies.

Reporting forms also may be downloaded from the PSRS website at <http://psrs.arc.nasa.gov>. Find the Reporting Form button at the top left corner of the PSRS home page. Click on it for the page with the "Download the Reporting Form" link in the second box. Clicking on the link will bring up Acrobat Reader from Adobe. Follow instructions for downloading a free copy and the PSRS form will appear on your screen. Print the form, fill it in, affix a stamp and mail to PSRS.

Will you accept anonymous reports?

PSRS forms completed with contact information allow the PSRS medical analysts to communicate with reporters when further clarification and/or explanation of information stated in the reports are needed.